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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
12 June 1966

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HIGHLIGHTS

US jets shot down one North Vietnamese MIG-17 fighter in a dogfight today about 45 miles northeast of Hanoi. While the Hue situation remains stalemated, speakers at a huge Catholic rally in Saigon generally expressed support for government policies. The enlarged Directorate, meanwhile, opposed granting any legislative authority to the constituent assembly scheduled to be elected in September.

1. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Allied/Vietnamese task force elements continue to press major offensive Operation HAWTHORNE/DAN THANG --against large-scale Viet Cong/PAVN troop concentrations in western Kontum Province (Paras. 1-2). Brigade-strength units of US 1st Air Cavalry Division launch parallel drive--Operation HOOKER--against Communist infiltration and withdrawal routes along southern Kontum - northern Pleiku Province/Cambodian border while US/ARVN Operation EL PASO II continues to inflict heavy losses on enemy units threatening Loc Ninh Special Forces camp in Binh Long Province (Paras. 3-4). USMC/ARVN Operation FLORIDA/DOAN KET I near Hue, in Thua Thien Province reports heavy contact (Para. 5). US 1st Infantry Division forces terminate 20-day Operation LEXINGTON in the Rung Sat Special Zone, southeast of Saigon (Para. 6). Estimated Viet Cong battalion attacks Vietnamese Regional Forces company south of Quang Ngai city (Para. 7).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
Premier Ky has decided to cancel his trip to South Korea (Para. 1). The enlarged Directorate met yesterday to consider the election law draft, and decided against allowing the constituent assembly to assume a legislative function (Para. 2). An accord between the government and FULRO, the rebellious tribal movement, may be near (Para. 3).

Forthcoming elections of Saigon University student leaders will largely be a test of

I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Two battalions of the US 101st Airborne Division and one battalion of the US 1st Air Cavalry Division are continuing to press their major offensive --Operation HAWTHORNE--against multiregimental Viet Cong/PAVN troop concentrations in western Kontum Province. Heavy fighting with two strongly entrenched North Vietnamese battalions approximately 15 miles north-northwest of Dak To Special Forces camp was reported during 10-11 June, but has apparently tapered off during the past 24 hours. US forces are being supported by three battalions of the ARVN 41st Regiment who are conducting road clearing Operation DAN THANG in an effort to secure Route 14 from Kontum city north to Dak To.

2. Since its initiation on 2 June, the combined Allied/Vietnamese drive has resulted in cumulative Communist losses of 393 killed and five captured, in contrast to friendly casualties of 39 killed (31 US), 176 wounded (154 US), and three US missing. A total of 249 tactical air sorties and several B-52 saturation bombing strikes have been flown thus far in support of the operation.

3. The allied campaign in Kontum Province was significantly reinforced and geographically expanded on 9 June with the commitment of three additional battalions of the US 1st Air Cavalry Division and Vietnamese CIDG Special Forces elements to border surveillance Operation HOOKER in southern Kontum and northern Pleiku provinces. The operational objective calls for the employment of saturation patrolling and reconnaissance-in-force techniques along this portion of the Cambodian/South Vietnamese border in an effort to block and destroy enemy forces attempting to use infiltration or withdrawal routes in the sweep area. No significant contact has thus far been reported.

4. In Binh Long Province, approximately 65 miles north of Saigon near the Cambodian border, Operation EL PASO II, involving four battalions of the US 1st Infantry Division and two ARVN battalions is moving ahead. The operation, initiated on 2 June primarily

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in reaction to intelligence reports of imminent large-scale Viet Cong/PAVN offensive activity against the Loc Ninh Special Forces camp, reported heavy contact on 11 June between a company-strength US patrol and an estimated Viet Cong company. In the five and one-half hour engagement that ensued, US forces--reinforced to battalion-strength and supported by heavy tactical air and artillery--killed 93 Viet Cong and captured one while sustaining friendly losses of 30 killed and 31 wounded. The action raised cumulative enemy losses in the 10-day ground sweep to 206 killed and two captured, as against allied casualties of 64 killed (46 US), 131 wounded (71 US), and 16 ARVN missing.

5. In Thua Thien Province, seven-battalion USMC/ARVN search-and-destroy Operation FLORIDA/DOAN KET I established sharp contact on 10 June with an estimated Viet Cong/PAVN hard core company crossing a river west-northwest of Hue. Twelve enemy troops were killed, thus increasing cumulative Communist losses in the three-day sweep to 20 killed and one captured. Friendly losses to date total one killed and four wounded (3 US).

6. Battalion-strength elements of the US 1st Infantry Division have ended search-and-destroy Operation LEXINGTON after 20 days in the Rung Sat Special Zone, 20 miles southeast of Saigon. The operation, targeted against an estimated 1,700 Viet Cong troops positioned along the swampy jungle banks of the main shipping channel to Saigon, resulted in enemy losses of 61 killed, 10 captured, and large quantities of individual weapons, ammunition, base camps, sampans, and foodstuffs captured or destroyed. American casualties were light, totaling only one killed and nine wounded.

Viet Cong Activity

7. Communist forces, striking in estimated battalion-strength, early today attacked the field positions of a Vietnamese Regional Forces company nine miles south of Quang Ngai city. Seven government troops were killed, 14 wounded, and two missing, against unknown enemy losses. A four-battalion ARVN

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reaction operation--QUYET THANG 234--has started in the area of the attack, with one Vietnamese Marine battalion reported in heavy contact with a Viet Cong force of undetermined size. An estimated 20 Viet Cong have reportedly been killed in this phase of the continuing action.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

Developments in the Government

1. Premier Ky has decided to cancel his scheduled trip to South Korea to address the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference, according to Information Minister Dinh Trinh Chinh. Chinh remarked that Ky decided against going because "many of us have been urging that his appearance would not be a good idea."

2. [REDACTED]
the enlarged Directorate met yesterday to consider the election law draft recently submitted by the election law drafting committee. The one major change made in the draft was the deletion of the provision which allowed the elected constituent assembly to assume a legislative function in addition to its constitution drafting duties.

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3. Continued negotiations between government representatives and FULRO, the dissident tribal autonomy movement, are apparently making headway. A special statute satisfying most of FULRO's grievances has been drafted, and the Commissioner for Montagnard Affairs reportedly hopes to get Premier Ky's agreement to it "in principle" within the next few days. The commissioner believes that this step would lead to the return of several hundred FULRO adherents to the government. The details of a final statute could then be worked out at a conference with the new returnees.

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Students

5. The recent resignation of the Saigon University Student Union president has necessitated the holding of new student union elections, which may take place next week. The US Embassy has commented that "struggle force" proponents have been making inroads in associated student executive committees since the government applied force in Da Nang on 15 May. Other student leaders still refusing to commit themselves to an antigovernment campaign have been subjected to considerable pressure and intimidation, and continued control by moderates is in some doubt.

Catholic Rally

6. A rally sponsored by the Catholic Citizens Bloc in downtown Saigon this morning was attended by some 70,000 to 80,000 persons, including 15,000 uniformed youths who paraded through the city with the cooperation of government security forces. The event was impressive in terms of orderliness and the number of participants. Themes expressed in speeches and banners were strongly anti-Communist, pro-American, and pro-Vietnamese Army. The Government itself was neither praised nor attacked, although support was expressed for some of its policies.

7. In one of this morning's speeches, Father Tran Du, secretary general of the Catholic Citizens Bloc, apparently was obliquely critical of both the scheduled elections and the recent civilian additions to the ruling Directorate. Du stated that the government must quickly restore democracy, but added that government measures agreed to under pressure from one clique or designed as "temporary excuses" would

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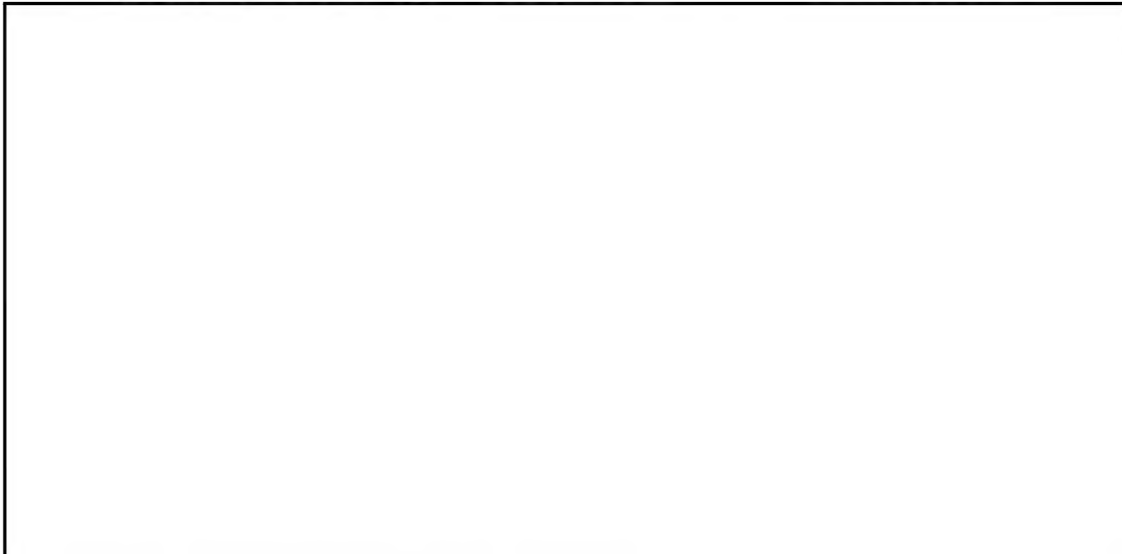
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only hinder its realization. Various Catholic leaders have privately said that September elections might be premature.

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Buddhist Activities in Saigon

9. Public activities by the Buddhists in Saigon were relatively subdued this weekend. Yesterday, 100 monks and nuns were reported to be on a hunger strike; today, approximately 2,000 Buddhists participated in special prayer services inside the Institute grounds.

10. Generally, Buddhist leaders in Saigon appear to be taking steps to undercut their critics while maintaining their opposition to the government and their pressure on the US to abandon its support for Ky. According to the press, a 15-point communiqué issued recently by the Institute contained strong anti-Communist and antineutralist statements.

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The Buddhists apparently hope to attract broader support in their antigovernment campaign by abjuring violence and thus appearing more responsible.

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11. The Institute, however, appears to have joined militant Tri Quang in his call for a boycott of the September elections. According to the US Embassy, a communiqué issued by the Institute on 10 June declared that a decision had been reached by the Institute council to practice "noncooperation in the election for the constitutional convention which the government is now organizing." The communiqué was unsigned, but bore the official Institute seal.

Hue

12. The uneasy coexistence between government security forces and dissident elements in Hue continued over the weekend and the city was generally quiet. Police field forces which arrived on Friday have not yet begun to make any arrests or clear the altars from the streets. Hue radio, again operating under government control, has been broadcasting various psychological ploys to end the passive resistance movement, which includes a civil servants' strike and a halt in commercial activity in addition to the altar blockade. Government announcements have threatened store owners with a loss of their licenses if they do not reopen for business. Food allotments have been promised to civil servants returning to work, although food shipments for the general public will not become available until the streets have been cleared of altars. A communiqué signed by the First Division commander and broadcast on 10 June announced that two Buddhist chaplains in the division had been dismissed from their posts. Government facilities are also apparently jamming broadcasts of the clandestine "Voice of Buddhist Salvation" radio.

13. Thus far, the government appears to have been successful in breaking the strike by civil servants; a substantial majority have reported back to work. General economic activity, however, remains at a standstill, with most shops still closed and the number of altars in the streets increasing in some areas. US Consulate officials have commented that although Tri Quang and his supporters still have a good deal of strength, time appears to be on the side of the government, at least in the short run.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. US Navy F8E Crusaders, flying cover for strike aircraft approximately 45 miles northeast of Hanoi on 12 June, encountered four North Vietnamese MIG-17 Fresco fighters. In the ensuing engagement, US fighters shot down one MIG and may have damaged another. No US fighters were lost or damaged in the engagement despite Hanoi's claims that a unit of its air force had downed a US jet plane on 12 June.

3. This is the first time in several weeks that North Vietnamese fighters have aggressively engaged US fighters. In late April and early May, after a number of DRV fighters had deployed to Haiphong/Kien An Airfield, a number of engagements were fought between US and DRV fighters. At least six, possibly seven DRV aircraft were shot down during these engagements against one probable US loss. The absence of fighter interdiction efforts in the past several weeks is believed to reflect Hanoi's attempts to evaluate the earlier engagements and possibly to develop other tactics when committing its limited fighter force to aerial combat. It is too early to tell, however, whether the engagement of the 12th presages another period of increased aggressiveness on the part of the North Vietnamese.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. In the wake of Ho Chi Minh's visit to Peking, Hanoi has come out with strong expressions of support for China's antirevisionist policy. On 10 June, Hanoi radio broadcast official press criticism of Yugoslav revisionism, charging Tito with being an "out and out henchman of the US" who shed "crocodile tears over the suffering of the Vietnamese people" while ignoring the "war crimes of the American aggressors." As if to underscore these press attacks, on 10 June the DRV delegation attending the Mongolian Party Congress in Ulan Bator walked out during a speech by the chief of the Yugoslav delegation.

2. In Hanoi, the annual report of the Vietnam-China Friendship Association was released on 10 June and provided further evidence of North Vietnam's desire for better relations between the two countries. The report extolled the "unreserved, tremendous, and effective assistance" rendered by the Chinese to the Vietnamese people, and went on to praise the "militant friendship" uniting the two peoples. It concluded by asserting the importance of the Vietnamese "heroic struggle" to the defense of the socialist revolution and construction in China.

3. In Moscow, a North Vietnamese trade union delegation closed out its visit with somewhat less effusive praise for its hosts. The delegation head, Nguyen Cong Hoa, told a TASS correspondent yesterday that "once again we are convinced that the Soviet people are a true and reliable ally of Vietnam in the struggle against American aggression."

4. Speculation continues as to Hanoi's current attitude toward negotiations

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On 10 June, Yugoslav UN Representative Lekic told Ambassador Goldberg it was his "understanding" that Hanoi would neither insist on the reunification of Vietnam nor make US troop withdrawal from South Vietnam a "priority item" in negotiations. Further, Lekic asserted

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that the Viet Cong does not plan to establish a Communist government, a point he termed "encouraging if true." Lekic also expressed his own views that North Vietnam is anxious to be considered a "separate entity" and that any negotiations should be with North Vietnam and the Viet Cong, excluding Communist China.

5. The basis for Lekic's "understanding" is unknown, and his conversations very possibly are merely "feelers" without any authorization from Hanoi or Peking. Over the past few months, Hanoi's public pronouncements have given no indication that they are prepared to back off from the Four Points they have long insisted would be the basis for talks.

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